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ABSTRACT

Kansas schools are currently accredited individually on the basis of annual reports to the State Department of Education and periodic visits of State Department personnel emphasizing primarily inputs to the educational program. Senate Bill 501 affords school systems the capability to be accredited as a total district on the basis of a five year cycle of program development and evaluation. The attendant planning and managerial procedures in combination provide an accountability model for local school districts. It is at once both freeing in that it allows school districts the flexibility to develop programs and allocate resources in light of locally determined goals, and responsible in that it requires program and fiscal accounting in terms of progress toward those goals. These characteristics ensure, in fact enhance, local control of education. (Author/WM)

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PROJECT KANSAS 76: CONCEPT PAPER

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACCOUNTABILITY PROCEDURES IN KANSAS SCHOOL DISTRICTS

AN OCCASIONAL PAPER DEVELOPED BY THE PROJECT KANSAS 76 STAFF

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Project Kansas 76 is a cooperative effort to identify and develop new leadership skills and roles in Kansas education. Participating in the project, which is funded under Part D of the Education Professions Development Act, are the Kansas State Department of Education, Kansas State University, University of Kansas, Wichita State University, and the Wichita, Junction City, Manhattan, and Kansas City, Kansas school districts.

Major thrusts of the project include the cooperative assessment of educational needs in the three school systems, the identification of additional skills required by practitioners to meet these needs, and the possible suggestion of new types of leadership roles which seem feasible to satisfy identified needs and priorities. Programs will then be established to upgrade practitioner skills and to prepare people to fill new leadership roles which evolve.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACCOUNTABILITY PROCEDURES IN KANSAS SCHOOL DISTRICTS*

By

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February, 1973

*The proposals contained in this paper do not represent the official position of any agency, organization, or group. They are totally the responsibility of the author. However, they are very compatible with the provisions of H. B. 1552 and 1973 legislative recommendation I. A. of the Kansas State Board of Education.

BACKGROUND

The 1972 Kansas Legislature passed into law Senate Bill 501 which provides an alternative procedure by which to accredit Kansas schools. The law is enabling and not mandatory. Essentially it affords school districts the option of being accredited as a total system on the basis of a five year program of district-wide evaluation. Currently, schools are accredited individually on the basis of annual reports to the State Department of Education and periodic visits of State Department personnel. These reports and visits emphasize primarily inputs to the educational program - library holdings, facilities, preparation of professional staff, etc. Those Kansas high schools holding membership in the North Central Association (a regional accrediting agency) do an intensive self-study every seven years and host a visiting team for a 2-3 day extended analysis of the school's self-study. Once again, however, the self-study deals primarily with inputs and there is little provision for continuing program development, implementation, and evaluation activities after the departure of the visiting team.

NATURE AND CURRENT STATUS OF DISTRICT-WIDE ACCREDITATION

Senate Bill 501 (1972 Kansas Legislature) affords school systems the capability to be accredited as a total district on the basis of a five year cycle of program development and evaluation. As this option is currently being structured and implemented in selected districts by KSDE personnel, it contains the following basic features:

- Community, student, and staff involvement in the development of priority educational goals for the district.

- A status study of current programs to discover the degree to which they are contributing to the achievement of priority goals (this implies measurement of student behaviors which logically derive from priority goals - goal indicators).

- The development of program and instructional objectives which derive from the goals and can contribute to their achievement.

- The generation of alternative program improvements and modifications designed to achieve objectives derived from priority goals.

- A cost benefit and cost effectiveness analysis of each program alternative.

- Selection and implementation of those program alternatives judged to be most beneficial and effective.

- An evaluation of implemented program alternatives over time in terms of the degree to which they are contributing to the achievement of objectives they were designed to meet.

- Continual feedback and recycling with program modification as necessary.

These features are in essence nothing more than the phases or stages of a long range planning process and are primarily program-oriented. However, they contain within them and give rise to certain management procedures which can afford school districts the capabilty to be accountable for the program decisions they make. Chief among these are:

- Annual reporting to the State Board of Education and to local constituents in terms of progress toward locally determined goals (program outputs) as opposed to annual reporting in terms of inputs.

- Budgeting procedures which allocate resources in terms of program categories logically derived from goals as opposed to budgeting by line items (essentially this is PPBES).

- Accounting procedures which assign fiscal transactions to funds reflecting goals and program categories.

- A management information system (MIS) which affords local decision-makers immediate access to program information concerning progress toward goals and fiscal information concerning resource allocation patterns in terms of goals and program categories.

- A staff evaluation system which assesses performance in meeting program and instructional objectives as opposed to evaluation in terms of input (shows willingness to grow professionally) or process (gets along well with students) characteristics.

These planning and managerial procedures in combination provide an accountability model for local school districts which is perhaps second to none among those currently being considered across the country. It is at once both freeing in that it allows school districts the flexibility to develop programs and allocate resources in light of locally determined goals, and responsible in that it requires program and fiscal accounting in terms of progress toward those goals. These characteristics ensure, in fact enhance, local control of education. The functions of the local Board of Education are elevated above traditional primary concern with the raising and expending of funds.

Currently two (2) Kansas school districts have undertaken district-wide accreditation as authorized by SB 501 and as described above. One of these districts is in the second phase of the program planning cycle - a status study of current programs in light of locally determined priority goals. The other is in the goal prioritizing phase and will soon be ready to enter the status study stage. Comments and inquiries from the field indicate that as many as 10-15 districts are desirous of initiating district-wide accreditation in the 1973-74 school year.

PROPOSALS

This paper has attempted to point out that district-wide accreditation, as authorized by SB 501 and as currently being structured and implemented by KSDE, contains within it the elements of a district level accountability model which is both freeing and responsible. A logical extension of the current state of affairs would be to utilize selected districts undertaking district-wide accreditation as pilot districts in the development of the accountability model described herein. The pilot approach to the development of a procedure as complex as accountability is desirable for a number of reasons. Among the most important reasons are the following:

- It is relatively inexpensive.
- Inevitable mistakes and false starts assured in the developmental process are minimized in their effects. Lessons are learned in a small number of school districts; not in all of them.
- Resistance to a new procedure can be minimized and familiarity and acceptance of it maximized throughout the course of the developmental period.
- The wide variety of skills and expertise necessary to develop such a procedure are concentrated and integrated at the operational level - the local school district.

Specifically, in order to operationalize the pilot approach in the development of a district level accountability model, it is proposed that:

1. Four (4) districts undertaking district-wide accreditation be designated as "pilot accountability districts".
2. These districts reflect the range of Kansas school districts as to:
   - size (student enrollment)
   - setting (rural-suburban-urban)

3. These districts be so designated for a three year period beginning with the start of the 1973-74 school year.

4. A sum of $10,000 be provided each pilot district by the state for the duration of the pilot period to be used to support anticipated development costs. A total state expenditure of $40,000 over a three year period is suggested.

At the end of the three year period of development, the state will realize the following returns on its suggested investment of $40,000:

1. An accountability model applicable to all Kansas school districts which includes:

   · A program planning guide which provides specific and alternative procedures at each stage of the planning cycle.

   · Reporting, budgeting, and accounting procedures which relate to locally determined goals and program categories. Guides are envisioned here also.

2. A systematic method for applying the skills and expertise residing in the state's institutions of higher learning to program improvement in local school districts.

3. A cadre of people from within KSDE, local school districts, and institutions of higher learning possessing the skills necessary to facilitate implementation of the accountability model in all school districts upon termination of the pilot period.

4. An analysis of existing statutory and regulatory provisions which inhibit the implementation of the local accountability model described herein along with recommendations as to needed amendments and/or repeals.

5. A way for the taxpayers and their elected representatives to know "whaty they're getting for their money" in terms of educational outcomes.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PILOT APPROACH

A variety of alternatives are available to facilitate implementa-

tion of the pilot approach suggested in this paper. Among those which come to mind are the following:

- Amend SB 501 to provide for pilot districts and the financial authorization suggested herein.
- Amend an appropriate bill or bills to be introduced this session. Bills having to do with school finance, teacher evaluation, program improvement, or staff development might appropriately incorporate these proposals.
- Draft separate legislation authorizing and providing for the proposals contained herein under an appropriate rubric such as planning, program development, accountability or whatever is deemed most feasible.

No doubt the political leaders responsible for legislating the nature of educational practice in Kansas can find ways to provide for these proposals - if they view them as capable of contributing to a more effective and efficient public education system in our state. It is the opinion of the author that the proposals outlined in this paper can do just that and, for this reason, the most serious and considered attention to them is requested.

Session of 1973

HOUSE BILL No. 1552

By Committee on Education

2-26

AN ACT concerning school districts; accountability and improvement of educational programs.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:

Section 1. The state board of education shall adopt a program to improve educational relevancy and accountability among at least three (3) school districts of Kansas. Relevancy refers to the two-fold problem of meeting the personal needs of each learner in a rapidly changing society while at the same time fulfilling the needs of the local community, the state, and the nation. Accountability is concerned with results—the effectiveness of the program and whether it is administered efficiently in terms of personnel, facilities, and dollar cost. Several elements are necessary for bringing general and local education needs into sharp focus, for administering to those needs, and for evaluating the effectiveness of such efforts in terms of the educational product and the cost. From appropriations made available for such purpose, the state board of education shall provide financial incentives to allow for local needs assessment, careful planning of measurable objectives, and development of a system of evaluation and program accounting.

Sec. 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its publication in the statute book.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Recommendation:

That legislation be enacted to encourage and lend assistance to the public schools of Kansas in relating educative process more specifically and effectively to the needs of learners through well defined goals and objectives, and, to determine the relative value of school programs as compared to learning results and dollar cost. The financial assistance provided should be of a magnitude that will allow the Kansas State Department of Education to work with at least three unified districts. Assistance from KSDE personnel would be funded from regular budget sources.

Rationale:

This recommendation relates to widespread concern about educational relevancy and accountability among school districts of Kansas. Relevancy refers to the two-fold problem of meeting the personal needs of each learner in a rapidly changing society while at the same time fulfilling the needs of the local community, the state, and the nation. Accountability is concerned with results—the effectiveness of the program and whether it is administered efficiently in terms of personnel, facilities, and dollar cost.

Several elements are necessary for bringing general and local education needs into sharp focus, for administering to those needs, and for evaluating the effectiveness of such efforts in terms of the educational product and the cost. School districts—limited as they are by tax lids, budget ceilings, taxable resources, and qualified personnel—cannot be expected to expend such efforts as required for an all-out improvement program unless additional incentives and special leadership can be provided. Financial incentives provided by state funding should allow for local needs assessment, careful planning of measurable objectives, and development of a system of evaluation and program accounting. Much consultative help from the state level will be required to implement such a program.

The State Board of Education adopted *State-wide Goals for Education* on July 6, 1972, highlighting a developmental endeavor of more than two years. Extended effort has been made to bring the goals and objectives to the attention of those concerned with education and interest has been encouraging. Specific programs are now needed to show how these goals and objectives can be effected at the state level.

A strict accountability law at this time would result in a crash program of implementation. Several districts are now working with the KSDE on implementation of programs for educational improvement and accountability. Two years of such experience would prove extremely valuable in designing appropriate accountability legislation for Kansas.